

New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for 21st-Century Life and Careers

INTRODUCTION

Life and Career Education in the 21st Century

In the 21st century, life and work are conducted in a dynamic context that includes:

- A global society facing complex political, economic, technological, and environmental challenges
- A service economy driven by information, knowledge, and innovation
- Diverse communities and workplaces that rely on cross-cultural collaborative relationships and virtual social networks
- An intensely competitive and constantly changing worldwide marketplace

Providing New Jersey students with the life and career skills needed to function optimally within this dynamic context is a critical focus and organizing principle of K-12 public education. New Jersey has both an obligation to prepare its young people to thrive in this environment, and a vested economic interest in grooming an engaged citizenry made up of productive members of a global workforce that rewards innovation, creativity, and adaptation to change.

Mission: *21st-century life and career skills enable students to make informed decisions that prepare them to engage as active citizens in a dynamic global society and to successfully meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st-century global workplace.*

Vision: The systematic integration of 21st-century life and career skills across the K-12 curriculum and in career and technical education programs fosters a population that:

- Applies critical thinking and problem-solving skills to make reasoned decisions at home, in the workplace, and in the global community.
- Uses effective communication, communication technology, and collaboration skills to interact with cultural sensitivity in diverse communities and to work in cross-cultural teams in the multinational workplace.
- Is financially literate and financially responsible at home and in the broader community.
- Demonstrates creative and entrepreneurial thinking by recognizing and acting on promising opportunities while accepting responsibility for possible risks.
- Is knowledgeable about careers and can plan, execute, and alter career goals in response to changing societal and economic conditions.
- Produces community, business, and political leaders who demonstrate core ethical values, including the values of democracy and free enterprise, during interactions with the global community.

Intent and Spirit of the 21st-Century Life and Career Standards

Through instruction in life and career skills, all students acquire the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for life as citizens and workers in the 21st century.

- In **Preschool**, children's social and emotional development provides the foundation for later learning about careers and life skills (<http://www.nj.gov/education/ece/code/expectations/>).
- In grades **K-5**, students are introduced to 21st-century life skills that are critical for personal, academic, and social development. They are also introduced to career awareness information and to basic personal financial literacy skills.
- In grades **6-8**, students continue to develop 21st-century life skills and personal financial literacy, while also exploring careers that support their academic and personal interests and aptitudes. As they prepare for the transition to high school, students are provided with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to real or simulated career challenges.

- In grades **9-12**, students develop increasingly sophisticated 21st-century life skills and personal financial literacy. They engage in the process of career preparation by participating in structured learning experiences, specialized programs, and advanced courses that reflect personal aptitudes and career interests found within one or more of the 16 career clusters developed by the [States Career Clusters Initiative](#).

The Revised Standards

There are four revised 21st-Century Life and Careers standards. Standards 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3 describe life and career skills that are integrated throughout the K-12 curriculum, while Standard 9.4 describes specialized skills that are taught in grades 9-12 as part of career and technical education programs. An overview of the four standards follows.

Standard 9.1 21st-Century Life and Career Skills: *All students will demonstrate the creative, critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills needed to function successfully as both global citizens and workers in diverse ethnic and organizational cultures.*

Standard 9.1 describes skills that prepare students to fully engage in civic and work life. The standard includes six strands, which reflect the [Framework for 21st Century Learning](#):

- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Creativity and Innovation
- Collaboration, Teamwork, and Leadership
- Cross-Cultural Understanding and Interpersonal Communication
- Communication and Media Fluency
- Accountability, Productivity, and Ethics

Standard 9.2 Personal Financial Literacy: *All students will develop skills and strategies that promote personal and financial responsibility related to financial planning, savings, investment, and charitable giving in the global economy.*

Standard 9.2 describes skills that prepare students for personal and civic financial literacy. The inclusion of Personal Financial Literacy as a standard, rather than as a strand, reflects the growing need for 21st-century citizens to be financially literate, particularly in light of the increasing number of financial choices they face due to the global economy. Financial literacy includes the application of knowledge, skills, and ethical values when making consumer and financial decisions that impact the self, the family, and the local and global communities.

Standard 9.2 is aligned to the Jump \$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy's [National Standards in K-12 Personal Finance Education](#) and includes seven strands:

- Income and Careers
- Money Management
- Credit and Debt Management
- Planning, Saving, and Investing
- Becoming a Critical Consumer
- Civic Financial Responsibility
- Risk Management and Insurance

Standard 9.3 Career Awareness, Exploration, and Preparation: *All students will apply knowledge about and engage in the process of career awareness, exploration, and preparation in order to navigate the globally competitive work environment of the information age.*

Standard 9.3 describes skills that prepare students for career pursuits and lifelong learning. The three strands in Standard 9.3 reflect the requirements outlined in New Jersey Administrative Code (N.J.A.C. 6A:8-3.2):

- Career Awareness (grades K-4)
- Career Exploration (grades 5-8)
- Career Preparation (grades 9-12)

Standard 9.4 Career and Technical Education: *All students who complete a career and technical education program will acquire academic and technical skills for careers in emerging and established professions that lead to technical skill proficiency, credentials, certificates, licenses, and/or degrees.*

Standard 9.4 describes knowledge and skills that prepare students for postsecondary education, training, and employment in a chosen career pathway. Unlike Standards 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3, which apply to all students from grades K-12, Standard 9.4 applies only to high school students enrolled in career and technical education programs.

The adoption of the career and technical education standard reflects the call to action in recent reports by the [National Association of State Boards of Education](#), the [National Governors Association](#), the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#), and [Achieve](#) regarding the potential of career and technical education, as well as the requirements of the [Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006](#). These documents urge states to adopt policies and practices that effectively integrate academic content standards in career and technical education programs in order to both elevate the role of career and technical education and to align it with postsecondary education and training.

The 16 strands in Standard 9.4 align with the 16 career clusters of the [States Career Clusters Initiative](#). Each strand is further refined to reflect multiple career pathways. By using the clusters as an organizing tool for grouping occupations and careers, Standard 9.4 identifies a common set of knowledge and skills for success within each broad career cluster, as well as for each career pathway within that cluster. This framework has been reviewed nationally by teams of business, industry, labor, education, and higher education representatives to ensure that it encompasses industry-validated knowledge and skills needed for career success.

For each of the 16 career cluster strands, content statements and cumulative progress indicators are provided for the overall career cluster, and additional content statements and cumulative progress indicators are provided for each of the career pathways encompassed by the cluster. Further, each of the 16 overarching career cluster strands is comprised of two types of cumulative progress indicators:

- Cumulative progress indicators for foundational knowledge and skills, which may be taught as part of a variety of academic and/or career and technical education courses.
- Cumulative progress indicators that are specific to the career cluster and/or career pathway under discussion.

Two additional resources are provided in connection with Standard 9.4 to support navigation of Standard 9.4 and understanding of career and technical education (CTE) programs:

- The [Career Clusters Table](#) describes each of the 16 career clusters and lists the career pathways associated with each cluster.
- [More About CTE Programs](#) provides a definition of career and technical education programs and points to information about the development of Standard 9.4.

Resources

Kendall, J. S., & Marzano, R J. (2000). *Content knowledge: A compendium of standards and benchmarks for K-12 education* (3rd ed.). Aurora, CO: Mid-Continental Research for Education and Learning, & Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

New Jersey State Department of Education. (1996). *New Jersey core curriculum content standards*. Trenton, NJ: Author.

New Jersey State Department of Education. (1999). *Career education and consumer, family, and life skills framework*. Trenton, NJ: Author.

New Jersey State Department of Education. (2004). *New Jersey core curriculum content standards. Standard 9: Career education and consumer, family, and life skills*. Trenton, NJ: Author.

New Jersey State Department of Education. (2008). *Standards clarification project*. Trenton, NJ: Author. Online: <http://www.nj.gov/education/aps/njscp>

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (expanded 2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Curriculum and Development.

Resources Specific to Standard 9.1 21st-Century Life and Career Skills

Partnership for 21st Century Learning. (2009). *Framework for 21st century learning*. Online: <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org>

Resources Specific to Standard 9.2 Personal Financial Literacy

Carolan, C. A. (2007). *The ABCs of credit card finance: Essential facts for students*. Trenton, NJ: New Jersey Coalition for Financial Education. Online: http://www.njcfe.org/IFE-ABC_text.html

Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. (2007). *National standards in K-12 personal finance education: With benchmarks, knowledge statements, and glossary* (3rd ed.). Online: <http://www.jumpstart.org/national-standards.html>

Utah State Office of Education. (2004). *General financial literacy*. Online: <http://www.uen.org/core/core.do?courseNum=520802>

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. (2006). *Wisconsin's model academic standards for personal financial literacy*. Online: <http://dpi.wi.gov/standards/pdf/pfl.pdf>

Resources Specific to Standard 9.3 Career Awareness, Exploration, and Preparation

National Career Development Guidelines. Online: http://cte.ed.gov/nationalinitiatives/gandctools.cfm?&pass_dis=1

New Jersey Department of Education. (2005). *N.J.A.C. 6A:8, Standards and assessment for student achievement*. Trenton, NJ: Author. Online: <http://www.nj.gov/education/code/current/title6a/chap8.pdf>

Resources Specific to Standard 9.4 Career and Technical Education

National Association of State Boards of Education Study Group on Promoting Excellence in Career and Technical Education. (2008). *Learning to work, working to learn: Transforming career and technical education*. Alexandria, VA: Author. Online: <http://www.nasbe.org>

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. (2007). *Issue brief: Retooling career technical education*. Washington DC: Author. Online: <http://www.nga.org/center>

New Jersey Department of Education. (2005). *N.J.A.C. 6A:8, Standards and assessment for student achievement*. Trenton, NJ: Author. Online: <http://www.nj.gov/education/code/current/title6a/chap8.pdf>

New Jersey Department of Education. (2006). *N.J.A.C. 6A:19, Career and technical education programs and standards*. Trenton, NJ: Author. Online: <http://www.nj.gov/education/code/current/title6a/chap19.pdf>

New Jersey Department of Education. (2008). *New Jersey five-year state plan for career and technical education*. Trenton, N.J. Author.

States Career Clusters Initiative. (2008). *Career clusters framework*. Silver Spring, MD: Author. Online: <http://www.careerclusters.org>

States Career Clusters Initiative. (2008). *Career clusters knowledge & skill charts*. Silver Spring, MD: Author. Online: <http://www.careerclusters.org/resources/web/ks.php>

United States Department of Education. (2006). *Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, Public Law 109-270*. Washington, DC: Author.